



Al Dhafra Private Schools, Al Ain

Student Protection Policy

Policy Statement

Al Dhafra Private Schools, Al Ain (ADAA) takes seriously its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people in its care and protect them from abuse. The Abu Dhabi Education Council defines students' protection as:

all measures, steps, and procedures taken to avoid exposure of students (in or out school, during school activities and transportation) to any danger or harm whether manipulation, violence, physical injury, sexual assault, any vocal insult, moral threatening, or harm of any type.

Al Dhafra Private Schools, Al Ain must ensure that its policies:

Protect students, prevent manipulation, overruling, physical and sexual assault, insult or any kind of harm students may be exposed to and know students who may be subjected to harm.

Support cultural, social, and psychological growth of students to be mature and confident in society.

(Abu Dhabi Education: *Education First*, 2015-16 p. 27)

Aims

ADPS Al Ain has a duty to safeguard its students from abuse and harm.

An effective whole-school student protection policy is one that:

Provides clear direction to staff and others about how to students' security and safety and the expected behaviour when dealing with child protection issues. An effective policy also makes explicit the school's commitment to the development of good practice and sound procedures.

This ensures that child protection concerns, referrals and monitoring may be handled sensitively, professionally and in ways that support the needs of the child.

Communicates with students and their parents to provide awareness and clarify responsibilities and common roles between school and home.

Provides support and engagement to enable the students to trust employees in the school without fear of being exposed to maltreatment, manipulation or persecution.

Types of Abuse

Neglect

The persistent or severe neglect of a child which results in impairment of health or development. For example: Frequently without food for the school day, poor appearance and hygiene, left alone frequently below the age of 14 without any adult supervision.

Physical abuse

Actual or likely physical injury to a child, or failure to prevent physical injury or suffering.
For example: Frequent bruises, change in personality, reluctance to call home.

Sexual abuse

Actual or likely exploitation of a child by involvement in sexual activities without informed consent or understanding, or that violate social taboos or family roles.

For example: Overly provocative behaviour, use of sexually explicit language, asking questions of a sexual nature.

Emotional

Actual or likely severe adverse effects on the emotional and behavioural development of a child by persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection.

For example: Shy and withdrawn, disinterest in activities or school generally, noticeable change in mood.

Potential abuse

Situations where children may not have been abused but where social and medical assessments indicate a high degree of risk that they might be abused in the future, including situations where another child in the household has been abused, or where there is a known abuser.

For example: A known violent sibling or parent, threatening behaviour from an adult within the household.

School Policy

There are three main elements to our child protection policy;

Prevention through the creation of a positive school atmosphere and the teaching, pastoral support and tutor program offered to pupils through the Class Advisors.

Protection by following agreed procedures, ensuring staff are trained and supported to respond appropriately and sensitively to child protection concerns.

Support to pupils through raising awareness and responding to those may have been abused.

This policy applies to all pupils, staff, Board of Trustee members, volunteers and visitors to ADAA. The school recognises that high student self-esteem, confidence, supportive friends and clear lines of communication with a trusted adult help to prevent abuse.

The Principal will act as a guardian for each child and accept the implications of that status while the child is in the school's trust, whether in school grounds or on school buses.

Our school will therefore:

Establish and maintain an environment where students feel safe and secure, are encouraged to talk and are listened to.

Ensure that students know that there are tutors and advisors within the school who they can approach if they are worried or are in difficulty or at risk of abuse.

Include in the curriculum activities and opportunities for personal, social and health education, information and skills to equip students to stay safe from abuse.

Include in the curriculum material that will help pupils develop realistic attitudes to the responsibilities of adult life.

Ensure that wherever possible every effort will be made to establish effective working relationships with parents and colleagues from outside agencies.

The role of the Student Protection Committee is to:

Have individual responsibility for reporting child protection concerns to the Principal, parents and PSQA.

Keep written records of concerns about children - noting the date, event and action taken.

Investigate further, where required, with all relevant parties and that there are set procedures for reporting and following up concerns.

Adhere to the procedures set out by the Principal when an allegation is made against a member of staff.

Monitor child protection awareness in the school and ensure that due diligence is given to Child Protection issues.

Establish and maintain an ethos where children feel secure and are encouraged to talk, and are listened to.

Ensure that children know that there are adults and persons in the school whom they can approach if they are worried or in difficulty.

ADAA has established policies on bullying, positive behaviour and health and safety. These policies all serve to support and enhance the Student Protection Policy.

The Principal and the Student Protection Team will meet regularly – twice per trimester - to discuss Child Protection within the school and to review policies and share best practice procedures.

Procedures

The ADAA has established a team of Student Protection Officers from Kindergarten, Primary and Secondary, together with two Social Workers, the Vice Principal and Principal.

This committee will form immediately upon the Principal being advised of a child protection problem and will investigate evidence of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, whether by students, staff or parents.

Any case of abuse will send a written report to ADEC within 24 hours following the receipt of the Child Protection Committee investigation reports.

The committee will take the necessary steps to ensure the safety of the child in question and any others who may be at risk.

All staff should be alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and know to whom they should report concern or suspicions.

Three designated Student Protection Officers, together with a Social Worker, with knowledge and skills in recognising and acting upon child protection concerns is the first point of contact for staff and parents where a concern is identified.

Staff with designated responsibility for child protection should receive appropriate training. There is an effective whole school policy against bullying.

ADAA operates safe recruitment procedures to ensure that any full, supply or volunteer staff are security checked prior to employment/engagement.

Student Protection Officers

The main tasks of the Child Protection Officers are to:

Ensure that the Principal is kept fully informed of any concerns.

Ensure that all staff are aware of these procedures.

Ensure that the safeguarding procedures are followed in the school.

Ensure that appropriate training and support is provided to all staff through qualified CPD. Decide whether to take further action about specific concerns.

Ensure that accurate records are maintained on individual cases and these are kept in a secure place and marked "strictly confidential".

Provide guidance to parents and staff about obtaining support.

Specifically:

Any member of staff concerned about a child must inform a Child Protection Officer immediately. She will inform the Principal.

The member of staff must record factual information regarding their concerns on the same day. The record must be a clear, concise and factual account of the observations.

The Social Worker, in consultation with the Child Protection Team and Principal, will decide whether the concerns should be referred to an outside agency.

Recognising Child Abuse – When to be concerned

It is important that all members of staff including visiting staff, should be aware and alert to possible outward signs of abuse or neglect. Signs of abuse may include one or more of the following:

An injury that is not typical of the bumps and scrapes associated with everyday activities, or an injury that is not consistent with any explanation given.

Frequent injuries even when apparently reasonable explanations are given. Sudden changes in behaviour, performance or attitude.

Anxiety or low self-esteem.

Knowledge of sexual matters beyond what would normally be expected, or sexual behaviour that is unusually explicit or inappropriate to the child's age.

Disclosure of an experience in which the child may have been significantly harmed.

Dealing with a Disclosure

Listen to what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief.

Accept what is being said and allow the child to talk freely.

Reassure the child, but do not make promises that might be impossible to keep.

Do not promise confidentiality, as it might be necessary to refer the case to the Social Police and ADEC.

Reassure the child that what has happened is not their fault and stress that it was right to talk.

Listen rather than ask direct questions; asking minimal open rather than leading questions.

Explain what has to be done next and who has to be told.

Staff will be informed of relevant information in respect of individual cases regarding child protection on a "need to know basis" only. Any information shared with a member of staff in this way must be held confidentially to themselves.

Assessment and Record Keeping

Make notes as soon as possible after the conversation.

Do not destroy the original notes in case they are needed by a court.

Record the date, time, place and any noticeable non-verbal behaviour and the words used by the child.

Record statements and observations, not interpretations or assumptions.

These file notes are kept in a confidential file, which is separate to other files, and stored in a secure place by the Child Protection Officer (Social Worker). In the same way notes must be kept of any pupil who is being monitored for child protection reasons.

If a pupil transfers from the school, these files will be copied for the new establishment and forwarded to the pupil's new school marked 'Confidential' and for the attention of the receiving school's Child Protection Officer (Social Worker).

UAE Regulations and Support

In the event of an incident occurring, the school must report it to ADEC – PSQA (Licensing and Accreditation Division) verbally, as soon as possible after it has occurred and in writing within 24 hours.

Depending on the severity of the case, the school may then need to report it to the Higher Committee of Child Protection - part of the Ministry of Interior Affairs. There is a Family Protection Centre as well as follow up. It also provides accommodation and support homes for abused women and children (until 14 yrs of age.)

Allegations Involving School Staff

Allegations against staff, volunteers or the Social Worker should be reported to the Principal.

Any member of staff who has reason to suspect that a child may have been abused by another member of staff, either at school or elsewhere, must immediately inform the Principal. A record of the concerns must be made, including a note of any witness to the incident or allegation.

In the event of an allegation against the Principal, this should be reported to ADEC who will contact the appropriate school representative. If the member of staff is deemed unsuitable after an internal investigation, then the school reports it to ADEC -PSQA immediately and ADEC approval will be taken away and all necessary actions to end the staff member's ability to work in the UAE will be taken.

Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) and Relevant Local Authorities

The school undertakes to report to the ISA and any relevant local authorities within one month of leaving the school, any person (whether employed, contracted, a volunteer or student) whose services are no longer used because he or she is considered unsuitable to work with children.

Guidelines for Staff

This guidance is issued within this policy for the protection of both staff and pupils. In education, all relationships are founded on trust. It is vital for those in positions of trust to understand the power this gives them over those in their care, and the responsibility they must exercise as a consequence.

Do not let suspicion, disclosure or allegations of abuse go unreported or unrecorded. Do provide access for pupils to talk to you about any concerns they may have.

Plan activities that involve more than one other person being present, or are at least within sight or hearing of others.

If it is necessary to speak to a child alone, always inform another member of staff where you are. It is advisable not to close the door of the room.

Recognise that caution is required in sensitive moments of counselling on matters such as bullying, bereavement or abuse.

On residential trips, pupils and staff must have separate sleeping accommodation.

Avoid situations that compromise your relationship with pupils and are unacceptable within a relationship of trust.

During coaching of sport or instrumental teaching, where a degree of physical contact may be inevitable, staff must be particularly aware that this should only be used to develop skills/techniques or to treat or prevent injury.

Staff are advised to avoid transporting a single child in a vehicle without principal's approval even in case of an emergency.

Remember that someone else may misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned. Do not have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with pupils. Avoid suggestive remarks or gestures, even in fun.

Do not jump to conclusions about others without checking the facts. Do not rely on your good name to protect you.

Do not believe “it could never happen to me”.

Attendance at Student Protection Conferences

It is the responsibility of the Student Protection Officer to ensure that the school is represented or a report is submitted to any child protection conference called for children on their school roll or previously known to them. Whoever attends should be fully briefed on any issues or concerns the school has and be prepared to make decisions on registration at the end of the conference.

When a child is placed on the Student Protection Register and is, therefore, a child with a plan, it is the Student Protection Officer’s responsibility to ensure that the child is monitored regarding their school attendance, welfare and presentation.

Whistle blowing

We recognise that children cannot be expected to raise concerns in an environment where staff fail to do so.

All staff are expected to fully comply, at all times, with the School’s Code of Conduct.

All staff should be aware of their duty to raise concerns about the attitude or actions of colleagues. If necessary they should speak to a member of the School’s Leadership Team.

Policy review

The School’s Leadership Team is responsible for ensuring the annual review of this policy.

The School will ensure that regular professional development on Child Protection is run for all staff and is also raised as a topic for students.

The Leadership Team is also responsible for ensuring that the list of key contacts is kept up to date.

Adopted on 01/01/2013

Revised Oct 15, 2015 with acknowledgement to Al Dhafra Private School, Abu Dhabi